

not found at all by human search. Bereavement, disappointment, poverty, sore conscience, ill-health, the wickedness or unfaithfulness of others—these are only a few of the causes of the pains and woes of our brothers and sisters.

2. *Most of our trouble comes, directly or indirectly, from the fact that there are devils in this world.* The demon of alcohol, the demon of a violent temper, the demon of greed—how many people these grievously vex! We may not have nowadays exactly the same sort of demoniacal possession which cursed Palestine in the days of our Lord, but the demons are here, nevertheless. They possess the bodies, minds, and souls of many, and there are few thoughtful people who are not able to reckon among the chief causes of their earthly sorrow and pain the sad fact that somebody in some way related to or connected with them is grievously vexed with a devil.

3. *We may bring all our trouble to Jesus, sure that he will have sympathy, even though his followers have not.* So far as the record shows, no sorrow ever came to his notice with which he did not deeply sympathize, and which he did not try to relieve. Many sincere followers of Jesus fail to copy his example in this. They sympathize with all sorts of sufferers, excepting only the poor people who are grievously vexed with devils. "It is their own fault," they say, which is often true, but they forget that the man whose heartaches are caused by his own fault is the man of all men deepest in need of sympathy.

4. *Let us not be discouraged if our prayer is not at once answered.* Do not be deceived by apparant delay. "He that tarrieth will come and will not tarry." Our Lord not only sympathizes, he relieves. He brings joy to the troubled by curing their woes.

"Depend on him; thou canst not fall;  
Make all thy wants and wishes known;  
Fear not; his merits must prevail;  
Ask but in faith, it shall be done."

#### The Lesson Applied

1. *A great sorrow.*—A great sorrow lay on this woman's heart. It was more than an ordinary sickness with which her child was afflicted. Sickness itself brings sore affliction to a true mother's heart, but here was a child possessed by an unclean demon. This was a sad case. All the loving hopes of that mother which arose in her bosom as the little child lay in her arms were blasted when she found that its faculties would not develop. It was a great sorrow and yet it turned out for good. That affliction, like many others, proved to be an angel from heaven, for it brought this woman to the feet of Jesus. No sorrow ever comes amiss that drives people to Jesus. She was a wise mother, carrying her sorrow and burden to Jesus. Let us do likewise.

2. *Development of faith.*—To the cries of this mother Jesus answered not a word. It seemed almost cruel, for he had the power and could have instantly healed her child.

Why did he not? He meant to develop her faith and this he did. He was preparing that mother for far richer, greater, fuller, and sweeter blessings. It is thus that he deals with his children. Jesus had in store rich blessings for this woman, but her heart must be prepared for their reception. In this way God develops our faith. He may be silent to our cries for a time and we feel as though God has forsaken us, but we should keep on praying, for in due time the blessing will come, just as soon, indeed, as our hearts are ready for it.

3. *For others also.*—The gospel was not alone for the Jews, though it was to be offered to them first. It is a universal gospel, intended for the whole human race. Preachers should remember that the spiritual food they dispense is not alone for those in the church, but for others who have not tasted to see that the Lord is good. It is to be passed on from one to the other until the ends of the earth have received it.

4. *A great faith.*—Here is the great lesson the story teaches, a great faith receives a great blessing. According to the measure of faith is the measure of the gift. If your blessings are meager it is because your faith also is meager. Go to God with a large faith, large desires, large expectations, make large requests, and the answer will be according to the faith.

#### Prayer Offered, Tested, Rewarded

1. *Prayer offered.* Note in the offering of this prayer that it was offered, (1) In the spirit of worshipful acknowledgement. The woman knew something of Jesus' claims, as is evident from her words, and readily acknowledges them. (2) In the spirit of humility. She recognized her position and condition, and demanded nothing, but humbly sued for mercy. (3) In the spirit of trust. She showed her trust not only in his power, but in his love. (4) In the spirit of definiteness. She had a very definite trouble which was weighing upon her mind and heart, and she brought this great trouble to the Master and definitely petitioned him to remove it by healing her sorely-vexed daughter. These elements should enter into all our prayers—the elements of worship, humility, trust, and definiteness in petition.

2. *Prayer tested.* The offered prayer was not answered immediately. The sincerity of the prayer was to be tested. Did it well up from a heart overflowing with love for the daughter and faith in the divine healer? Note, (a) That the first test was a test by silence. Jesus "answered her not a word." This silence made her realize her position more keenly. She was a Gentile, Jesus was a Jew; would he help her? It was a hard test! Would her faith be equal to it? This test of silence is the hardest test today to which our prayers are put, to see whether they are based upon a living faith in the Master or not. If they are, the test is met, and we wait God's own time to answer our petitions, just as we asked them, or as he sees fit to modify them. Note

again, (b) That the second test was a test by words. Jesus answers the request of the disciples by stating his mission, which was primarily to the Jews. Discouraging words for a Gentile to hear. But her faith did not falter, for she came and worshiped him, saying, "Lord, help me." Then comes Jesus's direct words to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." This last test was also met, wonderfully met, and then the reward came, fully and freely.

3. *Prayer rewarded.* Why was the answer to the woman's prayer so long delayed? Two reasons can be readily seen, (a) To bring the woman's faith to a fuller development, and (b) To enlarge the disciples' conception of the mission of Christ. He did not come as a great miracle worker for the world, nor as the shepherd seeking solely the lost sheep of Israel, but as the great shepherd of all; and wherever he found his sheep, whether in the Jewish or the Gentile world, he would be a shepherd unto them. The reward of faithful, earnest prayer is now given, (1) In the approval of the Lord. "O woman, great is thy faith," which must have sounded very sweetly to her after the seemingly harsh words to which she had just listened. (2) In the granting of her petition—"Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." There was no further delay in the matter, for "her daughter was made whole from that hour."

#### Helpful Illustrations

Mr. Moody said his little boy called to him one day, "Papa, I want a drink," and then he went on with his play, and his father, not believing that the child really was in earnest, kept on with his reading. Soon the child spoke again, "Papa, I want a drink." But still he kept on with his play unconcernedly and his father read on. Presently he left his toys and came and took hold of his father's knees and said earnestly, "Papa, I am thirsty. I must have a drink." "Then," said Mr. Moody, "as soon as I saw that the child meant what he said I granted his request speedily. The fervent prayer brings answers."

*Prevailing prayer.* Before Jacob's great victory he abandoned the posture of defense and resistance, and fastened himself on to the angel, as a terrified child clasps his arms tightly around its father's neck. That is a glad moment in the history of the human spirit when it throws both arms around the risen Savior, and hangs on him, and will not let him go. It is the attitude of blessing. It is the posture of power. It is the sublime condition in which Christ will whisper his own new name, which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it. F. B. Meyer.

*A modern example.* In a mission chapel in Peking, China, where a prayer service was being held, a poor cooly came and knelt. He was so ignorant and stupid that it seemed he could not understand even the simple gospel message. While others were rejoicing he continued pleading the name of Jesus, which was all the prayer he knew. Soon he arose with a happy face, stammering out, "I am